

# — Police Brutality — How to Get Justice



*The article below is reprinted with a factual correction from Workers Vanguard No. 1182, September 2024.*

From the killing of Sonya Massey in Illinois to the brutal assault of NFL Dolphins player Tyreek Hill, cops continue to murder and attack black people as they please. Something must be done. The Spartacist League/U.S. has initiated the Open Police Archives (OPA) campaign to rebuild the movement against police terror. During our work, we have encountered families and activists who desperately want justice for their loved ones.

In all of these cases, families have been fighting for years, with no success. At the 10th anniversary of the killing of Michael Brown, his father, Michael Brown Sr. said: “The whole setup is supposed to break you—what it does to the parents is supposed to break you. It’s a life sentence that I’m living. The cops are never wrong. They’re consistently killing us—every 26 hours a black person is killed—every day.” The families want the cops who killed their loved ones to be jailed. They want the cops’ secret files opened and all trumped-up charges dropped. They want to put an end to police brutality.

The question is: how do you do all that? The lack of justice isn’t for lack of trying. In fact, the fight and courage these families show is commendable. But the methods being used are the fundamental obstacle to making progress.

## The Road to Nowhere

People think the road to justice goes through the courts, city councils, Democratic Party politicians and D.A.s, who all claim that they’ll do something to help and make sure “this never happens again.” But cases are dragged out for years with no answers, and cover-ups happen all the time—like the one by the Louisiana governor and D.A. in the case of Ronald Greene. Cops are constantly framing up black people, like Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Central Park 5, while killer cops get off scot-free. If they are charged, the charges get dropped. Sometimes, the D.A. straight-up rules that the cops had every right to kill, like in the case



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**Farmerville, Louisiana, May 10: OPA activists rally with family of Ronald Greene, killed by cops in 2019. Justice for victims of police terror requires class-struggle strategy.**

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of Daviri Robertson, who was killed by the police in 2019. The courts cannot be trusted.

Organizations like the NAACP and BLM say that electing more Democrats, especially black ones, to pass legislation to rein in the cops or making the police “accountable” to the community will help curb police brutality. But this has done nothing to even slow cop terror. People say that Kamala Harris is a “lesser evil” to Trump because of the bogeyman of Project 2025. People fear he will give full immunity to the police. But the cops are already allowed to kill and get away with it. Kamala, former top cop in California, is clear that she fully supports the cops—just listen to her “tough on crime” rants or look at her record as a prosecutor. She made her career by locking up black people on trumped-up charges in the Bay Area and will continue to enforce police terror. Kamala’s record clearly shows that all skinfolks ain’t kinfolks.

Things turn out this way not because bad people have bad ideas or the wrong people are in positions of authority but because of the *class* interests that the Democratic and Republican politicians, cops and courts represent. There are two classes in society. The capitalist class owns and controls the banks, mines and factories. The working class makes everything and is exploited by the capitalists. Their interests are totally at odds. The cops and courts will never be neutral—they exist to protect and serve the capitalist class and keep them in power.

Any strategy that relies on the tools of the oppressors can only lead to defeat. Just look at what happened to BLM. A main slogan was “defund the police,” i.e., cop reform. BLM’s whole approach was to gather up all “pro-black,” “anti-racist” elements—from activists in the streets to Joe Biden in the White House—to take this up. Making a coalition with capitalist forces, no matter how “progressive,” was doomed to fail because these forces will never do anything



WV Photo

**Bartow, Florida, April 2: Rally in defense of Antwan Glover outside Polk County Courthouse.**

to jeopardize their own interests, which include keeping black people down.

The idea of BLM was that the cops could somehow be “reformed” and the Democratic politicians would fight for black rights. Both proved wrong. It is a deadly illusion that the cops and courts (the capitalist state) can be made to stop serving the class that they exist to protect. The cops that gun down black people aren’t just a “few bad apples.” The problem isn’t a lack of regulations and sensitivity training or a “bad” police chief. Police terror is an essential part of enforcing black oppression in this country.

Cop reform schemes just rope black people and workers into the state machine that oppresses them. This includes “community control of the police,” tinkering with the cops’ budgets, and civilian review boards. People wait for rulings from civilian review boards that end up not mattering anyway, because the state just overrules anything they don’t like. Members of these boards are fired when they timidly ask questions about delays in cases that go on for years. Mayor of New York Eric Adams fired Arva Rice for daring to ask why the evidence from the Kawaski Trawick case was delayed for five years. These boards are powerless and ineffective—and it cannot be any other way. All that BLM’s strategy achieved was demoralization and disorganization.

## The Road Forward—Class Struggle

There is another road available—the road of class struggle—which can actually bring justice. OPA seeks to rebuild the movement on this basis. Class struggle means fighting back in ways that rely not on getting the courts, cops and politicians to “do the right thing” but rather on mobilizing the power of the multiracial working class. While we don’t rule out using the courts to our advantage, we have no illusions in the “justice” system.

To fight back against police terror and black oppression, what’s needed is to unite the broadest forces who stand on the side of black people—crucially including the multiracial working class. To be clear why, it is important to know what the source of the problem is. Black people are not oppressed because racists are in the White House (although they are) or because white people have bad ideas (although some do). In this country, black people are segregated at the bottom of society. They’re stuck in bad

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neighborhoods, schools and jobs, have access only to the worst healthcare and suffer constant racist police terror and mass incarceration.

The only way to fight any of this is to attack the source of the problem: capitalist class rule. The capitalist class uses black oppression to stay in power by keeping the country divided along racial lines. Instead of fighting against their real enemy, the capitalist class, workers are kept at each other's throats. The capitalists and their politicians push the lie that black people bring conditions down for white people and that white people are to blame for black oppression in order to hide the fact that they are responsible for both.

Some black people don't think that the white people in the working class have any reason to fight for them, but this couldn't be more untrue. White workers and black people share a common enemy. The more segregated and worse off the black population, the more it brings down conditions for the working class as a whole, including white workers. The only way white workers can improve their situation is by fighting against black oppression. This provides white workers every reason to actively defend black people against racist cop terror—even if most are not on board right now. In turn, black people need white workers not only to defend them, but also to fight for their liberation.

The working class has the power and interest to make real advances in the struggle against police brutality and black oppression. The very same cops and courts that terrorize black people attack workers when they take militant actions for a better life. We seek to get the workers movement to publicize, agitate, demonstrate and strike for justice—which will also put it in a better position to wage its own battles. But this must be organized against the capitalist forces and all their dirty tricks.

You cannot fight against police brutality in an alliance with the same forces perpetrating it, you must fight to land a blow against them in order to move forward. But this point is not obvious to everyone. People must see for themselves which side “progressive” politicians, who give lip service to black people, stand on. This is why we started our Open Police Archives campaign: to expose false “friends of black people” and draw the working class into the black struggle, so it can win some victories and create a strong movement to confront segregation and exploitation.

### Put the “Progressives” to the Test

We want to rebuild the movement against police brutality in a way that can actually succeed. We want to show in action what kind of methods are needed to get justice. Exposing the cops' dirty deeds is a basic act of self-defense for black people and the oppressed. It is also a red line that even the most “progressive” politicians do not want to cross. That's why there are so many cover-ups and sealed files that the families of victims are not allowed to see. Just look at the case of Eric Garner, whose grand jury files are still sealed.

There are politicians who claim to fight on behalf of black people. So, why don't they actually do something to prove it? Why don't they open the police archives and show where they really stand once and for all? Let's take Pamela Price, the Alameda County D.A. She got into office by pushing the police reform politics of BLM. She promised to make things better for black people and stop police violence. Clearly, that hasn't happened. She reopened some cases of police brutality and promised to jail the cops responsible, like those in the case of Mario Gonzalez, who was asphyxiated by Alameda cops in 2021 after they wrestled and pinned him to the ground. What has happened? Absolutely nothing.

## UNITED FRONT PROTEST: PACK THE COURTROOM!

Eric Duprey was killed in August 2023 by Bronx cop Duran, who threw a 40-lb. cooler at his head. Supporters of the Duprey family should mobilize in force for the court date!

**Press Conference/Rally**  
**Tues., October 8, 8 a.m.**  
**Bronx Supreme Criminal Court**  
**265 East 161st St.**

**Justice for Eric Duprey!**

**Jail “Cooler Killer” Cop Duran!**

**Open All Police Archives!**

[contact@openpolicearchives.org](mailto:contact@openpolicearchives.org)  
Phone: (929)-991-5983

**Initiators: OPA Committee-NYC and Black Lives Matter Greater NY**

**Endorsers: Hospital Workers Building Union Power**  
**New York Spartacist League**

**Parents Supporting Parents NY Inc.**  
**Partisan Defense Committee**

**Transit Workers for a Fighting Union**  
**Unified Black Caucus**

We want to make it very clear that not all initiators and endorsers of this rally necessarily agree in any particular with the views of *Workers Vanguard*.

Price is currently facing a recall election *not* because she failed black people, but because she's "too soft on crime." There is a movement to defend her from the right-wing recall. We say to those who defend Price: If you think she really doesn't deserve to be recalled, then make her actually do something in defense of black people. Demand that she open the police archives and jail the killer cops in Oakland! Make her show where she stands. Locking up their own thugs, like opening the police archives is also a red line that capitalist politicians don't want to cross. They are not about to throw the cops in jail for doing their jobs in service to the ruling class.

Some activists call for things that sound like what we're saying, but their purpose is to mobilize people under the same bankrupt politics of BLM. They want to get a "progressive" D.A. into office or vote for Democrats. We know where this road leads...nowhere. Our purpose in calling to "open the police archives" and "jail the killer cops" is to *expose* who the real enemy is and why we need to move forward without them. Mobilizing longshore workers in the Bay Area to take action, independent of and against capitalist politicians and state authorities, would do far more to bring justice for these families than any politician, court or city council could ever achieve.

## Open the Police Archives!

The case of Eric Garner has a direct connection to the working class. Garner comes from a transit family, and the powerful New York City transit union could cause some real grief for the capitalists and make real progress in opening up his sealed grand jury files. But why hasn't the union leadership mobilized the membership behind his case? It's because unions across the country are run by people who do not want to cause trouble for the capitalist class. That is why there have been no labor mobilizations to make the capitalists concede to demands in defense of black rights. The

union leadership is another reason the movement against police brutality is at an impasse. As part of rallying the unions to take up the fight for justice, there must be a struggle in the unions to replace the current union leadership with a class-struggle one.

It is absolutely essential to bring the fight for justice for victims of police brutality into the working class. Each individual case of police brutality must be connected to the fight against black oppression and the cause of labor as a whole. The fight against police brutality and black oppression more broadly is of direct importance to the working class. The more that these cases are taken up and seen as a cause of labor, the stronger the labor movement will be.

Getting these cases to take root in the working class will be a process requiring patience and persistence. The first step is to publicize these cases in unions and working-class communities. Making these connections is planting the seeds to rebuild the movement against police brutality in a way that can actually bring about justice.

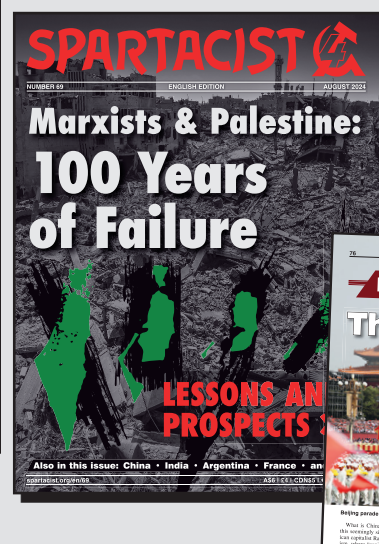
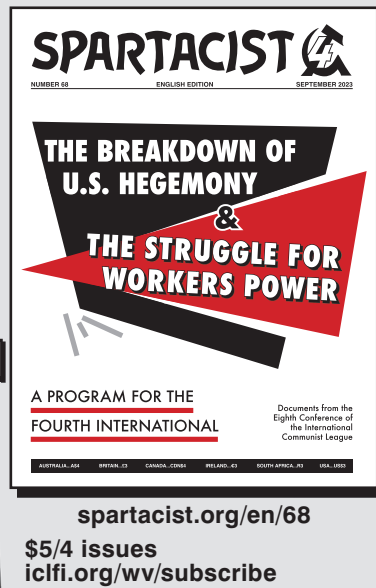
To this end, we have launched OPA committees in each of the cities where the SL/U.S. is located (NYC, L.A., Chicago and Oakland). The OPA committees will seek to expose the bankruptcy of relying on the Democrats and police reform, while fighting in the interests of workers, black people and all the oppressed to get justice. These committees will be organized around the following demands:

- Open all the police archives!
- The 100 most heinous cases in every city must be open to public scrutiny!
- For united multiracial class-struggle defense!

The committees will hold regular public meetings to discuss the campaign and map out its next steps. See contact details below for more information and to get involved. We also encourage all those who agree with the above perspective to launch their own OPA committees where they are. ■

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